

SMART SECTORS PROGRAM

ISSUE SUMMARY:

EPA's Smart Sectors is a partnership program that provides a platform to collaborate with regulated sectors and develop sensible approaches that better protect the environment and public health. The staff serves as agency ombuds-people for trade association partners who represent 13 economic sectors. The Smart Sectors program also analyzes data and provides advice on forward-thinking options for environmental improvement; conducts educational site visits and facilitate roundtables with EPA leadership; develops and updates statistical reports that characterize the impact of each sector on the economy and the environment, and maintains meaningful, open dialogue with trade association partners, their environmental committees, and all of their member companies.

BACKGROUND:

EPA launched Smart Sectors in October 2017 to improve stakeholder communication and involvement, in response to requests from stakeholders both inside and outside the agency, as well as stakeholder reactions to Executive Order 13771: "Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs," which directed agencies to seek input from entities significantly affected by regulations.

Smart Sectors is based on a previous agency program called "Sector Strategies," which was an outgrowth of EPA's Common Sense Initiative which began in the 1990s as part of the Clinton Administration's platform to "reinvent government." In 2003, the Sector Strategies program was launched to create effective non-regulatory solutions to environmental problems; facilitate communication with industry through regular meetings with associations; and increase the use of environmental management systems.

Successes: With a small, experienced, and dynamic 4-person team, Smart Sectors has implemented a holistic program working effectively across siloes at EPA to increase communication internally and with our external partners; developed data-driven "sector snapshots;" launched 10 similar programs in each region; highlighted industry best practices with videos, story maps, profiles, and infographics; deployed IT infrastructure in record time to help push out vital information to consumers about disinfectants that combat coronavirus; created a public-facing sectors website; maintain an internal metrics-tracking database; visited 32 sites to learn about sector operations; held 976 meetings with industry and EPA; renewed the Mercury Switch Memorandum of Understanding; and facilitated more than 15 Administrator, Assistant Administrator, and Regional Administrator dialogues.

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

☒ Congress ☒ Industry ☒ States ☒ Tribes ☐ Media ☒ Other Federal Agency
☐ NGO ☒ Local Governments ☒ Other: Trade Associations

EPA's key stakeholders are the American taxpayers who expect the agency to deliver clean air, land, and water. However, the effect of EPA regulations is on the regulated community - businesses who must comply with federal and state regulations. To achieve its goals, Smart Sectors partners with the trade associations that represent those businesses to maximize the reach and impact of the program. Smart Sectors works primarily with about 35 trade associations who represent thousands of member businesses in all 13 program sectors.

MOVING FORWARD:

We will continue to build out the program to achieve the stated goals. This will include our coordination with, and support for, all regional Smart Sectors programs. At a minimum, annually, we will add to and update the sector snapshots, complete an accomplishments document, and develop a strategic plan based on the Administrator's priorities.

LEAD OFFICE/REGION:

OTHER KEY OFFICES/REGIONS:

Lead Office: Office of Policy Immediate Office (Office of the Administrator); Lead EPA Region: Region 9